

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5026
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAGUA 1092

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, NU
SUBJECT: EMBOFFS' VISIT TO MONIMBO

REF: MANAGUA 1062

SUMMARY: MONIMBO, THE LARGELY INDIAN BARRIO OF MASAY, HAS BECOME THE SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE TO THE SOMOZA GOVERNMENT. BEGINNING APPROXIMATELY FEBRUARY 21 A SERIES OF DISTURBANCES, DEMONSTRATIONS, FIRES AND ACTUAL BATTLES TOOK PLACE IN MONIMBO WITH A RESULTANT SUBSTANTIAL LOSS IN PROPERTY AND LIVES. RELIABLE OR OBJECTIVE DATA ARE HARD TO COME BY. THE PEOPLE IN MONIMBO SAY THAT LAST OCTOBER TWO OF ITS RESIDENTS WERE TAKEN AWAY BY THE GUARDIA AND RETURNED DEAD; THEY ADD THAT THE GUARDIA TEAR-GASSED A PEACEFUL CHURCH CEREMONY ON FEB. 21. THE GUARDIA SAYS THAT IT RESPONDED TO GANGS OF MASKED THUGS WHO BURNED HOUSES AND CARS AND DISRUPTED ORDER IN THE CITY. WHO STARTED WHAT AND WHEN IS STILL UNCLEAR BUT WHAT IS CLEAR IS THE AMOUNT OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION THAT ENSUED ONCE THE VIOLENCE BEGAN. EMBOFFS HAVE VISITED MONIMBO TWICE IN RECENT DAYS AND THEIR REPORT FOLLOWS BELOW. END SUMMARY.

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1. EMBOFFS ARRIVEED COLEGIO SALESIANO ABOUT 11:30 AM, MARCH 4, LOOKING FOR FR. VASQUEZ, A COSTA RICAN PRIEST WHO HAS RESIDED IN NICARAGUA ABOUT 10 YEARS AND IS A PARISH PRIEST FOR MONIMBO DISTRICT OF MASAYA. IN THE COLEGIO WERE NUMEROUS VOLUNTEERS PREPARING FOOD DONATIONS, JOURNALISTS, A FEW MONIMBO RESIDENTS TO GIVE TESTIMONY ON GN ABUSES, AND A FEW POLITICAL ACTIVISTS SUCH AS MASAYA UDEL LEADERS. EMBOFFS WERE PRESENTED TO A YOUNG WOMAN WITH A BABY IN

ARMS WHO RELATED HOW SHE AND HER FAMILY HAD FOUND THEMSELVES AT THE SCENE OF A SHOOTOUT WITH THE GN THE PREVIOUS SUNDAY ON THEIR WAY TO THE MARKET. APPARENTLY, THEY HAD TAKEN REFUGE. SHE HEARD GN SHOOTING AND HAD GATHERED HER CHILDREN AND EMERGED SAYING "KILL ME BUT SPARE MY CHILDREN." SHE SAID SHE HAD BEEN BEATEN AND POINTED TO INDISTINCT WOUNDS. SHE SAID HER HUSBAND HAD REFUSED TO COME OUT AND THE GN HAD PUT A GUN TO HIS HEAD AND SHOT HIM DEAD.

2. SHE SAID SHE AND OTHERS HAD BEEN ROUNDED BY BY THE GN. A RED CROSS AMBULANCE HAD ARRIVED TO TAKE AWAY THE INJURED. THEY TOOK HER AND HER CHILDREN, BUT WHEN THEY TRIED TO LOAD SOME MEN, THE GN SAID NO. TWO HELICOPTERS HAD LANDED AND TAKEN EIGHT MEN AWAY.

3. DURING THE CONVERSATION A LARGE CROWD DEVELOPED AND A TAPE RECORDER APPEARED AND VARIOUS OTHER PEOPLE BECAME INVOLVED, MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW THE NARRATION.

4. SUBSEQUENTLY, EMBOFFS LOCATED FR. VASQUEZ AND MET WITH HIM PRIVATELY FOR ABOUT 1/2 HOUR. HE SAID THE RESIDENTS ARE TIRED AND WANT PEACE TO BE REESTABLISHED BUT THE COMMUNITY WAS DIVIDED. HE SAID THE OLD AND THE YOUNG AND THE WOMEN WANTED PEACE BUT THE MEN WANTED TO FIGHT TO THE DEATH. HE SAID HE HAD MET WITH GEN. FERNANDEZ, GN OFFICER-IN-CHARGE AND HAD TOLD HIM THIS. HE ALSO SAID THAT ONLY BY THE GON MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE FOR ROAD WORK, WATER AND SEWAGE COULD THE HOSTILITY BE GRADUALLY OVERCOME. HE SAID HE HAD EXPRESSED THIS OPINION TO GEN. FERNANDEZ WHO IS DIRECTING THE GN IN
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MASAYA.

5. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION AS TO HOW THE SITUATION HAD DEVELOPED, FR. VASQUEZ SAID THAT IT WAS A LONG-STANDING HOSTILITY DUE TO A LACK OF ATTENTION OF THE GON TO THE PEOPLE'S SOCIAL NECESSITIES. ALSO, THERE HAD BEEN DISQUIET SINCE THE OCTOBER ATTACK OF THE FSLN IN MASAY. THE PRIEST SAID TWO RESIDENTS OF MONIMBO HAD TAKEN PART IN THE ATTACK AND HAD BEEN CAPTURED AND SUBSEQUENTLY WERE KILLED AT THE GN COMMAND.

6. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN GROWING HOSTILITY AGAINST THE GN SINCE THEN. HOWEVER, THE EVENT WHICH TRIGGERED THE PROTESTS WAS WHEN THE GN HAD USED TEAR GAS TO BREAK UP A GROUP OF RESIDENTS WHO WERE LEAVING A CHURCH FOLLOWING A MEMORIAL MASS FOR PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO. HE SAID ABOUT TWENTY TEAR GAS BOMBS HAD BEEN THROWN INCLUDING INTO THE CHURCH. AS A RESULT OF THE GAS, ONE CHILD HAD DIED OF ASPHYXIATION. THE PEOPLE THEN BECAME AGITATED AND HAD DEMONSTRATED AND PUT UP BARRIERS AND LIGHTED FIRES.

7. FR. VASQUEZ SPOKE AT LENGTH EXPLAINING THAT HE HAD NO INVOLVEMENT IN ALLOWING THE SCHOOL OR THE ADJACENT CHURCH TO BE USED BY DEMONSTRATORS. HE SAID YOUTH HAD CLIMBED THE WALL

AND BROKEN IN ONE NIGHT AND MAY HAVE BEEN SHOOTING AND THROWING
HOMEMADE BOMBS FROM THESE SITES BUT THAT AFTER THE SHOOTOUT THEY HAD
LEFT THE SAME WAY DURING THE NIGHT AS HE HAD DEMONSTRATED TO THE GN.
HE SAID A LARGE NUMBER OF TEARGAS GRENADES HAD BEEN TOSSED INTO THE
PATIO OF THE SCHOOL.

8. FR. VASQUEZ SAID FOLLIWING THAT INCIDENT HE HAD RECEIVED
THREATS ON HIS LIFE. HE SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW WHO WAS THREATENING HIM
BUT THAT HE HAD BEEN UNDER OBSERVATION. HE WENT ON TO DESCRIBE
ACTIVITIES OF AN ORGANIZATION CALLED ANROC (LARGELY RETIRED GN AND
OTHER SUPPORTERS OF SOMOZA) CREATING DISTURBANCES IN THE COMMUNITY
BY PATROLLING ARMED THROUGH THE STREETS. HE ALSO REFERRED TO IVAN
HUECK (THE SON OF CORNELIO HUECK, PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPU-
TIES) HAVING DRIVEN INTO THE AREA AND HAVING SHOT AT AND WOUNDED ONE
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OF THE PROTESTORS WHO WERE THROWING ROCKS AT HIS CAR.

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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9. WITH REGARD TO WHO WAU ORGANIZING THE DEMONSTRATIONS, FR. VASQUEZ
SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW. HE SAID THEY WERE MAINLY YOUTHS WHO WERE THE
ACTIVISTS. HE SAID THAT THERE ALSO WAS A COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP BUT
THEY DIDN'T APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN THE ACTIVISTS OR HAVE BEEN CONTROLLING

THEM.

10. FR. VASQUEZ SAID THAT THE MOOD OF THE PEOPLE HAD BEEN VERY BRUTAL, AND REFERRED TO THREE SOMOZA INFORMANTS HAVING BEEN CAPTURED AND KILLED BY THE PEOPLE. HE SAID HE HAD INTERVENED AND SAVED ONE MAN WHO HAD LIKEWISE BEEN CAPTURED BUT THAT HE HAD BEEN AFRAID THE CAPTORS WERE GOING TO TURN ON HIM RATHER THAN LET THE MAN GO.

11. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE MOOD WAS AN "EYE-FOR-AN-EYE"... IN RESPONSE TO ANOTHER QUESTION, HE SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD THAT SOME GN MEMBERS WERE DRUNK WHEN THEY WERE CONDUCTING OPERATIONS IN THE AREA. HE PRODUCED FOR EMBASSY OFFICERS INTACT SHELL WHICH HAD BEEN FOUND NEAR THE SCHOOL (SUBSEQUENTLY IDENTIFIED AS AN M-79 RIFLE-FIRED GRENADE). HE SAID A FEW OTHER SPENT SHELLS HAD BEEN FOUND, BUT THAT THE GN NORMALLY REMOVED CASINGS OR OTHER EVIDENCE OF THEIR OPERATIONS.
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12. FR. VASQUEZ SAID HE WAS DISTURBED BY ANTI-U.S. AND ANTI-SPANISH SENTIMENT WHICH HAD ARISEN. IN CLOSING HE REITERATED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO DEFUSE THE SITUATION WOULD BE FOR THE GON TO BEGIN TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE WITHOUT FANFARE.

13. EMBOFFS WERE ACCOMPANIED BY FR. VASQUEZ TO A HOUSE WHERE SEVEN MEMBERS OF A FAMILY WERE REPORTEDLY MASSACRED BY THE GN. THE HOUSE, WHICH IS NEAR A NEW HIGHWAY WHICH RUNS PAST MASAY, WAS A ONE ROOM WOODEN STRUCTURE. THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE WAS A SHAMBLES AND THERE WAS BLOOD-STAINED CLOTHING. EMBOFFS WERE TOLD THE RED CROSS HAD FOUND SOME BODY TRACE (BRAINS) AND HAD TAKEN THE EVIDENCE. THE HOUSE HAD NUMEROUS HOLES IN IT, PREDOMINANTLY ONE ONE SIDE, AND SHOWING SIGNS OF EXITING BULLETS WHICH ALSO WAS INDICATED BY MARKS ON A NEARBY HOUSE AND A TREE.

14. A YOUNG WOMAN WHO LIVED NEXT DOOR IN A HUT SAID THE EVENING OF THE SHOOTING THERE HAD BEEN A FIREFIGHT ON THE HIGHWAY A FEW YARDS AWAY AND THAT THEN THE GN HAD KILLED THE SEVEN PEOPLE INCLUDING CHILDREN IN THE HOUSE AND TAKEN THE BODIES AWAY. SHE SAID WHEN SHE HAD COME OUT SHE HAD BEEN HIT BY THE GN.

15. EMBOFF SUBSEQUENTLY SPOKE WITH THE NEW MASAY GN COMMANDER, CO. SOLIS, AND GEN. FERNANDEZ WHO HAD ASSUMED SUPERVISORY COMMAND WHEN THE SITUATION HAD REACHED ITS WORST CONFLICT. FERNANDEZ EXPLAINED THAT THE PEOPLE WANTED PEACE AND FOR THE GN TO MAINTAIN ORDER. HE SAID THE PROBLEM HAD DEVELOPED BECAUSE OUTSIDE COMMUNIST AGITATORS HAD COME TO MONIMBO AND HAD TERRORIZED THE PEOPLE. HE REFERRED TO THREATS AGAINST THE PEOPLE BY MASKED YOUTH WHO ALSO HAD OFFERED MONEY TO PEOPLE WHO WOULD THROW BOMBS AT THE GN. HE REFERRED TO THE TORTURE AND EXECUTION OF INNOCENT SUPPORTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS HOUSE BURNINGS AS THE PROVOCATION WHICH FORCED THE GN TO

MOVE INTO THE AREA WITH FORCE TO RESTORE ORDER. ACCORDING TO FERNANDEZ
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MANY RESIDENTS HAD COME TO THEM BEGGING THE GN TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE AGITATORS AND SUBSEQUENTLY HAD PRAISED THEM FOR THEIR RESPONSE. HE SAID THE ONLY PEOPLE FIRING ON THE GN AND THROWING BOMBS WERE A GROUP OF ABOUT 20-30 EXTREMISTS. HE SAID HE BELIEVED THEY HAD NOW ALL LEFT MONIMBO TO SPEED SUBVERSION IN OTHER CITIES AND THAT THE SITUATION WOULD RETURN TO NORMAL.

16. FERNANDEZ DID NOT HAVE ANY FIGURE FOR DEAD AND INJURED IN THE FIGHTING AND SAID HE COULD NOT IDENTIFY THE AGITATORS. HE ALSO SAID THERE WERE 25 PERSONS UNDER ARREST AT THE COMMAND, 10 OF WHOM WERE BROUGHT TO MASAYA FROM ANOTHER AREA.

17. FERNANDEZ COMPLAINED THAT THE U.S. WAS LISTENING ONLY TO POLITICAL AGITATORS AND WOULD BE SAYING THE GN HAD BEEN VIOLATING HUMAN RIGHTS. BUT, IN FACT, THE GN HAD REACTED TO EXTREME PROVOCATION WITH RESTRAINT. HE SAID SOME DEMONSTRATORS HAD RUN INTO HOUSES AND HAD FIRED AT THE PURSUING GN FROM BEHIND WOMEN AND CHILDREN. THE GN HAD WITHELD FIRE TO AVOID HURTING INNOCENTS. HE DID, HOWEVER, ACKNOWLEDGE THAT NON-COMBATANTS HAD BEEN INJURED. HE SAID IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO COMPLETELY AVOID THIS. EMBOFF SAID HE RECOGNIZED THE GN HAD TO RESPOND TO A SITUATION SUCH AS THIS AND HAD A RIGHT TO EMPLOY NECESSARY FORCE AS LONG AS IT WAS A MEASURED RESPONSE TO PROTECT LIVES AND PROPERTY AND TO DEFEND THEMSELVES WHEN ATTACKED.

18. FERNANDEZ SAID HE HAD MET WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS AND PRIESTS AND ALREADY THE GON WAS RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY FOR FOOD AND PROJECTS SUCH AS ROAD REPAIR.

19. WHEN ASKED ABOUT ACTIVITIES OF ANROC AND THE REPORTS OF SEVEN KILLED IN THE HOUSE WHICH EMBOFFS HAD VISITED, FERNANDEZ AND SOLIS DENIED HAVING ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THESE REPORTS. SOLIS MENTIONED ANOTHER REPORT OF GN HAVING SHOT A CHILD AND HE HAD CONDUCTED AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MEN REPORTEDLY INVOLVED AND ALL OF THEM DENIED THE REPORT. RUBENSTEIN

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